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# APEIRON

**Apeiron:** *unlimited, indefinite*

1. The *arche*, that is the beginning or principle of all things was, according to Anaximander, the *apeiron*, the unlimited. The term is capable of various constructions, depending upon how one understands the limit. 2. More generally, indetermination, i.e., without internal limits, and so without beginning or end . . . 3. An undergraduate journal of philosophy for students of all majors at Washington College.

## Forward

Western philosophy emerged from a vague mixture of cosmological and religious speculation. At that time, philosophizing in the East had already flourished for millennia, primarily as embedded in religious systems of thought and conduct. The Greeks eased the important questions about the nature of the universe and the conduct of life out of the hands of priests and rhetoricians. Philosophy thence became the *archon*, the ruler and source, of virtually all the modern disciplines. Natural science, mathematics, political science, psychology and economics originated in considerations that were once the province of philosophy. Twenty-five centuries before Einstein, Heraclitus duly informed us that all is energy in radical flux. Modern computing originated in the philosopher's dream of unlocking the fundamental algorithms of human thought. Vast numbers of the human population, for better or worse, presently live under ideas and arrangements born of philosophers. Philosophy has been and remains the granter of visions, the maker of grand ideas, and the seedbed of invention. The "big questions" still call this strange, powerful, and often unnatural discipline their home.

Co-editors Misty Christensen and Jennifer Sutphin deserve particular recognition for both thinking and working beyond the limits of what is ordinarily thought reasonable, much less practical. Thank you and enjoy.

*Peter Weigel*

## Introduction

We are very pleased to note that the contributions to this second issue of **APEIRON** inquire into the big questions by going well beyond the usual limits of everyday thinking. Our authors peer through the gates of death to the possibility of reintegration and redemption (Jennifer Sutphin). They seek answers at the boundaries where art, life, and imagination coincide (Misty Christensen). They gaze East and then West (Autumn Thayer). Showing a playfulness increasingly rare in our shrill culture, they can laugh at their beloved field and thus at themselves (Misty Christensen). Finally, they probe the extremes of body, mind, and will (Jazmine Gabriel). Good philosophy always suggests the foolishness of assuming we know where the boundaries must always lie.

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## Who I Am

Jennifer Sutphin

A static voice sliced through the silence in the air, "*I am Rosemary's granddaughter, the spitting image of my father, and when the day is done my mama's still my biggest fan. Sometimes I'm clueless and I'm clumsy, but I've got friends that love me and they know just where I stand. It's all a part of me, and that's who I am.*"<sup>1</sup> I shook my head slowly and reached over to flick off the radio. "That one's going to be hard don't you think?" I asked.

Jeffrey Olen looked up at me across the littered office full of files. "What now?" he asked.

"Don't you think that'll be a hard case, if she's all those things then how do we make her the same person when we reincarnate her?" I asked, my brow furrowed.

Olen smiled, "That's not for me to answer, I'm just here to help." I could only shake my head at him. Here to help indeed, none of them had been any help ever.

It all started a week ago Tuesday. A memo, from God's desk to my inbox, congratulated me for being chosen as the Head of the Bodily Resurrection Department. It had been nothing but trouble ever since. Mind you, it's not as though God didn't offer me any help. I had more help than I could handle. My office was full, brimming with files, one manila folder for every person there is, or ever was, with new files coming in every day for the people who will be.

They were simple files really, name, dates of birth and death, pictures from different stages of life, and pages upon pages of personality and memory. My helpers, Jeffery Olen, Peter Van Inwagen, and St. Thomas Aquinas, busied themselves by sorting the files alphabetically as I couldn't really think of anything else for them to do. That and it cut down on their arguing.

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<sup>1</sup> Jessica Andrews, *Who I Am*, Perf. Jessica Andrews, DreamWorks Records, 2001.

My job, supposedly a simple one, was to put together everything, in all of the files, to make sure that every individual would be the same person in the afterlife as they were in their natural life. It seems simple when you first think about it, until you open the first file and realize just what a person really is. Olen's been more help there than anywhere else, reminding me that a human being is just a biological species, and that a person is something else entirely. That is to say people are rational, self-conscious, full of beliefs and desires, and more importantly, beliefs about those beliefs and desires. People have moral responsibility, and are treated as participants in a moral community with rights that are both moral and legal, capable of recognizing and responding to other people, and capable of some linguistic form of communication.

Worse than having to organize this mass resurrection was the help I was assigned. Olen, Van Inwagen, and Aquinas argued constantly. The arguing was not over the way I'd chosen to define a person, it was that they all had very different views on what should move on into the next life. I was going to have to decide which one of them was right, or at least who was more right than all of the others.

Olen, while able to come up with a good basic definition of a person, gave me troubles with just what should move on into the afterlife. He started off our meeting by announcing there should be two criteria for establishing personal identity, one for the body and another for the mind. I jumped at using memory to resurrect people, "After all, *remembering* my life happening to me, as being my life, is what makes it mine."

He shook his head, "We don't remember everything that happened to us. If I don't remember anything that happened to me in a certain period, does that mean that whoever existed 'in' my body then was not me?"<sup>2</sup>

He had a point. "Well no, I guess not" I said, then sat to listen as he explained that sometimes we could make up memories, embellish them, even change them to suit us. Genuine memory

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<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Olen, "Personal Identity and Life After Death," in *Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Louis Louis Pojman (New York: Wadsworth Publishing, 1998), 358-367.



comes from fact, the fact that the events remembered actually happened to the person in question. "It must be the body then," I said gamely, "proving that my *body* was in a place would prove that *I* was in that place," I cut him off before he could speak again, "but if we need to give people new bodies, I mean some of these people have been dead centuries and they'd be all decayed by now, how could we make them the same person?"

He slipped his pipe out of his mouth, "If we switched two brains, so that all the memories and personality traits of the persons involved were also switched, wouldn't we conclude that the person, as well as their brains, had switched bodies?"<sup>3</sup> I nodded, that's how it always seems to work in science fiction films.

"So, same brain same person?" I asked, he shrugged. "It doesn't really seem to work though, if I took someone's brain out of his dead body, and put it in a new afterlife body, wouldn't he feel like he'd switched bodies?"

Olen nodded, "So, probably, would the people who knew them."<sup>4</sup> He leaned back in his chair, "We are persons because we embody a psychology... if it is a psychology that makes a human being a person, then it is a particular psychology that makes a particular human being a particular person. Sameness of psychology constitutes sameness of person."<sup>5</sup> He went on and on, long through the evening debating over memory and consciousness until finally he brought up Quinton, a British philosopher who said that momentary consciousness could be joined into a series to form a stream of consciousness. This stream of consciousness makes us the same people we were yesterday.

All right, so if I accept this theory, I know what I need resurrect someone, but how to do it? Assuming I could get someone's psychology, his soul, where would I put it? Human beings are sensory oriented. The whole continuous stream of consciousness that made a person the same is based on their

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<sup>3</sup> Olen, 362.

<sup>4</sup> Olen, 362.

<sup>5</sup> Olen, 364.

sensory information. I'd have to put the soul into something. Olen reminded me that St. Paul wrote about the resurrection of a spiritual body, not a physical one in 1 *Corinthians*. "If," Olen said, "we can make sense of the claim that there might be such things as nonphysical bodies, then there is no reason why a nonphysical body could not embody a psychology."<sup>6</sup>

"So, it's simple, all I have to do is tell God to take people's souls out and put them into new spiritual bodies?" I scanned around the table for opposition.

Van Inwagen had it. The problem as he saw it, was not finding a criteria for sameness of person, it was using it. "If a man should be totally destroyed, then it is very hard to see how any man who comes into existence thereafter could be the same man. And I say this not because I have no criterion of identity I can employ in such cases, but because I have a criterion of identity for men, and it is, or seems to be, violated," he said.<sup>7</sup> Van Inwagen went on to say that the atoms that make up a person are in the spaces they are because of the person's biological life process. Even the atoms of a dead body are placed where they are because of the processes of life that used to go on in the person. He conceded that if the dead man was not too far decomposed and the processes of life could be restarted then that man may be the person he was before, though the same does not hold true for a cremated man. "If God," he began, "collects the atoms that used to constitute that man and "reassembles" them they will occupy the positions relative to one another they occupy because of God's miracle and not because of the operation of the natural processes that, taken collectively, were the life of that man."<sup>8</sup> Van Inwagen went on, through what was left of the night and into the day. He brought out the point that God said that human beings had to die because of the sins of Adam.

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<sup>6</sup> Olen, 366.

<sup>7</sup> Peter Van Inwagen, "The Possibility of Resurrection," in *Philosophy of Religion*, ed. Louis Pojman (New York: Wadsworth Publishing, 1998), 368-370.

<sup>8</sup> Van Inwagen, 369.

“Granted we have to die,” I said, “without death there isn’t really life, but isn’t there a way to circumvent the death issue?”

“What does it mean to say that I must die?” Van Inwagen asked, “Just this: that one day I shall be composed entirely of non-living matter; that is, I shall be a corpse. It is not part of the Christian faith that I must at any time be totally annihilated or disintegrate.”<sup>9</sup> He continued, saying that if God stopped the decay process, or if he replaced the corpses with artificial bodies that could decay, then perhaps God, and only God, could resurrect the body. He clung steadfastly though, to his belief that a body that was cremated or completely decayed could not be the same person if God restored its molecules because anything restored by God’s hand would bear some mark of restoration that it could never have gotten through natural life.

“But that’s why we’re here isn’t it?” I asked. “I wouldn’t have been given this project at all if God had all the bodies of all the people who ever lived stored up someplace so he could restart them late.”

“Perhaps, God is not so wholesale as this: perhaps He removes for “safe keeping” only the “core person” – the brain and central nervous system – or even some special part of it.”<sup>10</sup>

“That’s a new problem then isn’t it?” I asked. “What if God hasn’t been planning for this? What if he hasn’t been saving up the parts of people for resurrection? He can’t just start now, that would leave all the people who died before he started collecting without something to resurrect.”

Aquinas cleared his throat, “The soul is not material.”<sup>11</sup> Aquinas continued saying that the way things are perceived depends on what has the perception. He told us the intellectual soul knew the nature of something absolutely, and that if the soul knew something absolutely it had to be an absolute form itself, that is, a type of spiritual form not dependent on matter

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<sup>9</sup> Van Inwagen, 370.

<sup>10</sup> Van Inwagen, 370.

<sup>11</sup> St. Thomas Aquinas, *Summa Theologica* Ia. Q.79, in *St. Thomas Aquinas On Politics and Ethics*, ed. and trans. Paul E. Sigmund (New York: W.W Norton and Company, 1988), 35.

to exist. He believed that the soul could not be corrupted because it was made only of form. "Matter," he said, "acquires existence when it acquires form, and it ceases to exist when its form is separated from it. Now it is impossible for a form to be separated from itself and therefore it is impossible for a self-subsistent form to cease to exist."<sup>12</sup>

"So, if the soul is pure form then it couldn't be destroyed anyway, God wouldn't have to save them. That's it!" I yelled as just before bursting away from the table, almost turning it over. Resurrection was possible, and I could plan it out. I grabbed a quill and started writing up a memo for God. Olen, Van Inwagen, and Aquinas were more help than they first seemed, it's true they argued and stuck doggedly to their own opinions, but with a slight synthesis of all their thoughts, I had a plan.

The intellectual soul is pure form, which means it survives after the body dies. The soul embodies the psychology of a person, the person's perceptions, his likes and dislikes, everything that makes him the individual he is. When a person dies he is not totally annihilated; he just exits as a spiritual form which is still capable of thought. Since the soul is a form and not made of matter it passes unassisted to wait for resurrection. The psychology of that person is imprinted on the soul, and the soul is what also holds the person's stream of consciousness, and the stream of consciousness is what makes a person the same person over time. Humans are naturally sensory beings. We perceive our world, create our memories, and create our momentary consciousness by processing and responding to sensations. The soul, when placed in a new, spiritual body, could start to receive and process sensory information again. That is to say, the stream of consciousness would pick up again and the person would live in the afterlife as the person they had always been. Their identity is preserved through death to life again, through the sameness maintained by their continuous stream of consciousness.

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<sup>12</sup> Aquinas, 35.

## Foucault and Representation in “Las Meninas” Misty Christensen

In his *The Order of Things*, Michel Foucault analyzes Diego Velázquez’s “Las Meninas” because he believes this painting demonstrates the nature and implicit limits imposed by the attempt to represent the very *act* of representing as this act relates to the Classical Age. It is this representation of Classical representation which is Foucault’s main focus. Through analyzing this painting Foucault concludes that it is impossible to represent the act of representation.

“Las Meninas”<sup>1</sup> was painted by Velázquez in 1656 and depicts a scene of Velázquez himself painting a portrait of what can be assumed to be King Philip IV and his wife, Queen Mariana, because a dim glimpse of the royals is caught in the mirror in the background of the painting. Velázquez spent much of his time working in the Spanish court as the court painter. Hence, an interesting aspect of this painting is that the artist and the royal family are represented together, demonstrating the painter’s struggle to gain social status. In other words this painting can be interpreted to be a visual statement of the social rank desired by Velázquez.

It is the role of the spectator, however, and not some political statement of class division, that is the primary concept at play in the painting. The painter is staring outward towards us, the spectators, drawing us into an interaction with those depicted and consequently with the painting. Thus, the three roles needed for representation in “Las Meninas” are those of the painter, the models in the painting, and the spectators viewing the painting. This makes us feel as though the painting is alive or conscious. If the painting were able to speak, it would say three things: 1) “I see you seeing me,” 2) “I, in you, see myself being seen,” and 3) “I see you seeing yourself being seen.” We, the spectators, can also see ourselves being seen because of the receptive and acknowledging gaze of the artist. However, we can not actually see ourselves in the painting. Obviously the

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<sup>1</sup> See Fig. 1 at the end of this article.

mirror on the opposite wall cannot reflect the image of the spectator, instead it reflects the image of the king and queen. This constitutes an odd physical inaccuracy of the painting. The area where the king and queen are standing is assumed to be to the left of where the spectator would be standing and the mirror is opposite the spectator, but the king and queen cannot possibly be depicted in the mirror as they are.

There are five different points that the characters are looking at within the painting: the painter, the child in the center, the canvas on which the painter is painting, toward a point somewhere to the left of us the spectators (left of where the spectator would be standing, had he or she actually been in the painting), and also directly at the painting at the spectator. Naturally, it can be assumed that the king and queen would be looking at the painter, because he is supposedly painting their portrait. We see that some of the court attendants are focusing on the child in the center of the painting, and the woman at the right seems to be looking off somewhere to the left where the king and queen would be standing. Although the painter should also be looking at the king and queen or at the canvas on which he is painting (as is the man in the doorway), he is looking straight out of the picture at us, the spectators. "Las Meninas" is not a conventional painting for its time because it concerns itself with the role that vision plays in human self-definition.

There are two types of representation which Velázquez presents through his "Las Meninas." Each of these representative views describes the relationship held between the viewer of the world and the picturing of the world as it is experienced by the viewer. First, the artist represents that he or she sees the world. In this view, the artist is positioned on the same side of the picture as the viewer, reconstructing the world as he or she sees it, in purely geometric terms. An artist of the second of these views shows that the world is being seen. In this view, the artist creates a picture in which the world has cast its own image.

Usually paintings of Velázquez's time pose some kind of narrative aspect, however the meaning of this painting is something other than telling a story. The spectator must determine what event is being portrayed, and the plot thickens

because the spectator is implicated due to the artist's stare in the painting. Also, Velázquez painted "Las Meninas" leaving a great deal of space unoccupied and unaccounted for. It is painted in such a way that, if the spectator was actually in the depicted scene, the scene which is painted is exactly what would be experienced by him or her (with the exception that the spectator would also be represented in the mirror in the background). By painting in perspective, the picture is presented as appearing to the viewer as being at eye-level, and the painting is constructed in such a way that there is a fair amount of "empty" space which is unoccupied in the vast ceiling shown, further demonstrating the painting's unconventional nature.

In *The Order of Things*, Foucault describes the essence of Classic Episteme, the order of society as it relates to science, as being the concept of design. Foucault sees the fact that the true subjects of the painting, the king and the queen, are kept hidden from view as a symbol of the overall design of the painting—a knowledge where the subjects are kept secret. Foucault believes this seemingly impossible phenomenon shows that the central role of the 'subject' is gradually withdrawing from view. He sees that Velázquez's "Las Meninas" is the only painting where the signifier is also the one being signified.





Fig. 1. Velázquez, *Las Meninas* (1656), Museo del Prado, Madrid.



## Hinduism: Day and Night of the Brahma

Autumn Thayer

Imagine, for a moment, that nothing is separate; you and these pieces of paper are one; you and the chair you are sitting on are also one. Imagine also that you and the breath you are now taking are identical, as are yourself and all the beings of our world and our universe. This is an amazing notion to think about, and is, as you have probably experienced, difficult to realize. In our lives, we see ourselves as distinct from everything around us; our egos demand that they remain in the forefront of our existence, thereby creating a sense of separateness with the focus on “I” and “me”. But what if we could rise above our egos and rise above the sensation of disconnectedness, what would we discover? Hinduism is a religion based on this discovery. One of its greatest foundations is the oneness of all, for we all come from and are Brahman, pure consciousness and the supreme power of the entire universe. Separateness is an illusion of the physical world, called *prakriti*. These ideas and other fundamental Hindu beliefs are expressed in the ancient Hindu texts of the *Bhagavad Gita* and a group of other writings referred to, as a whole, as the *Upanishads*. Hinduism is a mystical religion, a religion intent on the realization of Brahman; this realization is seen as the ultimate goal of our lives on earth and is that which blasts away the ego-self and all duality, bringing the devoted to understand the oneness of all and to understand one’s own true Self.

Central and absolutely critical to the religion of Hinduism is Brahman. Brahman is the supreme reality, pure consciousness. In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad*, Brahman is called the Imperishable, that which has existed and will exist forever (BU, 3: 7-11). In this Upanishad we meet a wise sage by the name of Yajnavalkya, who is being asked two practical questions about the universe. The first question is about what the world is “woven” in, or rather in what does it exist; Yajnavalkya’s reply is that it is space in which the world is “woven” (BU, 3:6). That seems a realistic assessment. The

second question, however, deals with a fundamental aspect of Brahman: what is space itself woven in. Yajnavalkya's reply is "Akshara, the Imperishable (BU, 3:7-8)." It is in Brahman and from Brahman that space and its holdings are made and sustained, for Brahman is the "Lord of all creation (BG, 10:3-4)," it is through him, by him, and of him that the world is created. All beings have their source in the infinite Brahman (BG, 10:8). However, it is only by a very small portion of Brahman's being that the world is created and sustained: "I support the entire cosmos with only a fragment of my being (BG, 10:42)." Therefore, Brahman is both immanent and yet utterly transcendent to our present reality. Brahman remains unaffected by what happens in this realm of birth and death, for he is immutable and imperturbable.

One might think of Brahman as analogous to the Jewish, Christian, or Islamic God. In all three of these religions, God is the First Being and the creator of the universe. However, within Hinduism there is a wide pantheon of gods and goddesses, which are not found in Christianity, Judaism, or Islam. Finding these gods and goddesses within Hindu belief might seem contradictory to the belief in the supremacy and oneness of Brahman, however, these gods and goddesses are generally viewed as aspects of Brahman; they are a means by which to attempt to grasp Brahman's wonder. Huston Smith, a great writer of the world's religions, points out that these gods and goddesses are symbols that together show Brahman in all his glory (Smith, 36). There is a story in the Kena Upanishad that involves three of the most powerful and important gods in the Hindu pantheon: Agni, Vayu, and Indra, which can be understood to place the gods in their proper context and in their proper place. The gods were celebrating a victory and giving themselves all the credit; Brahman heard this and decided to give them a lesson (KeU, 3:1-2). Brahman appeared to the gods and they did not recognize him. So one by one each god went to see who this being was. When Agni, the god of fire, approached Brahman, Brahman asked him to burn a single straw and Agni could not do it (KeU, 3:6). When Vayu, god of air, approached, Brahman asked him to blow the single straw

away; he could not even make the straw budge (KeU, 3:10). Neither of them found out who the mysterious being was.

However, when Indra went to see Brahman, Brahman instantly disappeared and the goddess of wisdom, Uma, told Indra that the being he had seen was Brahman, “from whom comes all your power and glory (KeU, 3: 1).” The gods thus realized their true Self to be Brahman. On one level, this story tells us that even the gods derive their source and power from Brahman. When Agni was asked to burn up the straw Brahman offered, he could not, because Brahman did not let him; Brahman did not give him the power, for the power is truly Brahman’s alone. In this respect, the gods and goddesses are also shown to be personifications of the powers, and thus only aspects, of Brahman. This allegory also explains that even the gods, as beings and even as thought forms, derive their ultimate source from Brahman; as the gods’ true Selves are Brahman, how can we humans not also derive our true Selves in Brahman himself.

As the source of all creation, Brahman is the master of creation, outside it, but also within it. In the Hindu conception of creation we find the notions of the Day and Night of Brahma. The Day of Brahma is the dawn at which time comes into play; i.e. it is when creation is brought forth. As the Day of Brahma dawns, as the day dawns on earth, creation comes from its unmanifested source – Brahman (BG, 8:17). Creation itself comes from Brahman and is, therefore, manifested Brahman. One school of Hindu thought envisions creation during the Day of Brahma as the result of the union of the god Shiva and the goddess Shakti (Morrison, 167). Shiva is the god of the immortal spirit – Purusha – and dwells in the realm of the immortal; Shakti is the goddess of the realm of birth and death, where she dwells; she is the goddess of matter and mind – prakriti (Morrison, 167). These two heavenly beings together are Brahman and by their union all creation is manifested (Morrison, 167).

By using a god and a goddess to explain creation, the Hindi people that follow this school of belief are personifying Purusha and prakriti, spirit and matter/mind. Thereby, it is easier to understand the duality of mind/body and spirit

(Morrison, 167). The *Bhagavad Gita*, although never mentioning Shiva and Shakti, speaks of creation as the union of prakriti and Purusha as well. Prakriti is the womb of Brahman in which he places the seed; Brahman is the “seed-giving” father of creation (BG, 14:3-4). This seed is Purusha, pure spirit, pure Brahman; it is called the Atman. Brahman places a part of himself, and therefore his seed, into all creatures, thereby giving them life and sustenance, or prana: “I am the seed that can be found in every creature (BG, 10:39).” Our body is the manifested Brahman, but we also have a piece of unmanifested Brahman – our immortal Atman soul. Brahman supports all creation through his manifested and unmanifested presence in all things; the unmanifested Atman inside each one of us, is our true Self. None of us are separate from the Self, from Brahman, for “Brahmins, kshatriyas, creature, the universe, the gods, everything: these are the Self (BU, 2:4.6).” As each of our own days draw to an end here on earth, so too does the Day of Brahma. At dusk during the day of Brahma, all manifested forms are brought back into Brahman and during the Night of Brahma there is only Brahman in unmanifested form (BG, 8:18-19). The unmanifested is beyond the manifested and it is the unmanifested to which all manifested things return. Our world is transient but only Brahman, the truly unmanifested, is eternal. The Bhagavad Gita speaks of the transient state of the world when it presents Brahman as the destroyer of all: “I am time, the destroyer of all (BG, 11: 32).” All things will come to an end except for the immortal Brahman that dwells within us and is our truest Self. The cycle of Days and Nights of Brahma will continue forever and has been going on forever (BG, 8:19). The world is ever in a flux between creation and uncreation.

Most religions attempt to explain life and appease its suffering; Hinduism is no exception. We are in a world with much suffering. As a result, we are all most desperate to know why we are here and why we must suffer. What is the point of being in a world of such suffering? Finding some sort of purpose helps us to live with the despair we find in our lives. Hinduism explains life to be a place of spiritual growth, growth that can come from suffering. This is the purpose of our lives,

to grow and to know Brahman: “But where there is unity...that is the world of Brahman. This is the supreme goal of life (BU, 4:32).” As said above, we all have an Atman soul, an unmanifested and pure piece of Brahman. However, we do not realize this, we do not know Brahman as our true Self; even as the concepts are told to us, we are ignorant and mistake our Self for other things (BU, 4.4:5). Huston Smith, in his discussion of Hinduism, envisions the Atman in each of us as being a lamp covered in dirt that has accumulated over our many lifetimes (Smith, 22). I would rather envision our Atman covered with cobwebs, but would like to extend his analogy. So imagine, if you will, that our Atman is covered in cobwebs that have gathered throughout the lives we have led. These webs have obscured and continue to hide the presence of pure Brahman at our very core. Life’s supreme goal therefore comes to be to sweep away the cobwebs on our soul, to find the God within, so to speak, and to let it shine through our being.

The cobwebs that accumulate in our lifetimes hold our ego self in place, binding it to our Atman and suppressing the perception of who we really are. We mistake our true Self for our ego self, for we think “I, me, mine”. Our ego self has many demands and desires and it is these desires that determine the course of our next life (BU, 4:9). Reincarnation is a central belief to Hinduism as it affects and allows for the spiritual growth of our souls. We are not born once and expected to realize Brahman in one lifetime; we return many times, as many times as it takes for us to strip ourselves of our ego self and realize the true Self within us that is unmanifested Brahman (BG, 6:45). When we die, only our body dies; but we retain, if we have not realized Brahman, the impressions of our past life and lives (BU, 4:9). As previously noted, these impressions guide us into our next life. Our desires keep us bound to the world of birth and death, for we must return to earth to work out the satisfaction of our lingering desires (BU, 4.4:6). With lingering desire and a steady accumulation of cobwebs, we are caught up in the cycle of samsara, of birth and death, as we are continually reincarnated into this world. The cobwebs that cloud our understanding of our true Self keep us bound to our ego and to earthly existence.

In the Katha Upanishad, we find a man by the name of Nachiketa who waits for Yama, death, outside Yama's home for three days. Because Nachiketa had to wait for Yama so long, Yama grants Nachiketa three boons; one of these boons that Nachiketa asks for is the secret of death (KaU, 1:9,20-21). Yama, obliging, tells Nachiketa of those who only seek the pleasures of this world, who think of themselves as their body alone and think that when my body dies, I die; these people are caught up in an eternal cycle of birth, death, and rebirth, for they do not find their true Selves (KaU, 2:5-6). Yama is saying that those whose desires are for this world and the transient pleasures it can afford are mistaken in their true identity. Death holds sway over these people for they believe themselves to die entirely when their body dies (KaU, 2: 6). The mind set of these people, as Yama describes them, seems to be that of thinking nothing continues, 'I die and that is it, and so therefore I should try to accumulate as much pleasure while I can'. These people see nothing immortal in their being. Yama tells Nachiketa to seek the eternal Self, to desire not the pleasures of this world, but to desire the realization of Brahman – desire illumination (KaU, 2:7-9). Seek not the transient but the eternal, only then will samsara no longer hold you in its grasp and no longer will the cobwebs cover your soul. When we realize our true Self as Brahman, all our desires are met, for union with the supreme reality is where we will find true and ultimate bliss (BU, 4:21). Having all our desires met, and subsequently having found the true Self within us and thereby uniting ourselves with Brahman, destroys all desire and cleanses the Atman of the cobwebs that, through desire, bind it to the realm of death and rebirth. When we realize Brahman, we are illumined and liberated from the world of samsara after we die; we have achieved moksha, "the spiritual liberation that is life's supreme goal (Easwaran, 9)."

The cobwebs, which had been used metaphorically above, have actual meaning in Hinduism. Remember prakriti, from the discussion of creation, for a moment. Prakriti is matter, the physical world – manifested Brahman. From this same prakriti comes three gunas or threads (BG, 14:5). These three gunas shape prakriti and bind our Selves to our body in this life and to



our new bodies in future lives, as thread binds our clothing together (BG, 14:5-6). These are the cobwebs that encapsulate our Atman binding us to an earthly existence and obscuring the truth of our Self, for they all speak of attachment to the ego self and to selfish desire.

The first guna is sattva; it is the purest of the three gunas and is the highest in terms of spiritual evolution: a person who is farther along on the path of realization will have more sattva gunas than the other two types. In such a person, wisdom shines through and illumines the person's life (BG, 14:5-13). However, this guna still binds the Self to the body, despite its high state, for it binds us to an attachment of happiness (BG, 14:9). Our ego selves still have a part in our existence for we are attached to being happy and feeling "I am happy." The second guna is rajas. It is passion and anger based on our selfish desires. A person with the rajas guna dominantly encircling their Atman is bound to action and will pursue selfish ends, as they are driven only by their quest for the quenching of their desires (BG, 14:5-8). Their selfishness binds them to the earth, for their ego manifests itself strongly as it searches for selfish things and longs only for transient desires. The third and lowest guna is tamas. This gunas is delusion; it deludes us into apathy and slothfulness. People with this guna prominently wrapped around their Atman are bound to delusion and see themselves as completely separate from other beings (BG, 14:5-13). The ego self is strongly held in their minds and they are extremely deluded and unable to see the pure Atman Self hidden underneath their confusion. We could say that their cobwebs are extremely thick.

When I envision the gunas, I also envision them coming with a prescribed tightness and thickness, which I think helps in the metaphorical understanding of how they influence our personality and manner of being. Sattva to me seems thin and loose, allowing at times for greater wisdom to shine through. The tamas gunas seems thick and tight, never releasing its grasp, fully keeping the person bound to their own ego self. These three gunas confuse us, making us perceive ourselves as separate entities, which deters us from seeing the true Self within us. The three gunas make up the "divine maya" of

Brahman (BG, 7:14). We can think of this “divine maya” as a veil, a veil that makes us see all action and creation as separate from Brahman. The gunas that make up this veil, separate us from that which lies beyond the veil – Brahman: “people fail to look beyond [the gunas] to me, supreme and imperishable (BG, 7:13).” Those who seek the Self and find it can look beyond the veil and see Brahman; they overcome the gunas that encapsulate their Atman (BG, 7:12-15). Their cobwebs have been swept away. Having gone beyond the gunas they can leave behind samsara (BG, 14:20). Those who cannot see through the veil see only the appearance of things; they see only the distinction of everything in creation. Being able to look beyond the veil is almost like being able to tear it down, ridding the Self of all the nasty cobweb-like gunas and seeing Brahman within, and within everything else.

Realizing the Self means more than understanding it as an idea; it speaks rather of experiencing it as a truth. One must experience one’s true Self as Brahman, the unmanifested; it does nothing to understand the concept and even believe that it is true. It is therefore by experience that this concept of the Self moves from an idea to a truth within us. If experience is necessary, then there must be a way to gain that experience. Within Hinduism there are four main paths that one can follow in order to realize Brahman.

These four paths are extensively discussed in the *Bhagavad Gita*. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, we meet two men: Arjuna and Krishna. Arjuna is a prince about to go to war for the right to govern his country, but becomes troubled and does not want to fight (BG, 1). Krishna, however, tells him he must fight – it is his duty, his dharma (BG, 2:33, 37-38). The reader quickly realizes that the impending battle that Arjuna must fight is not an external battle against his foes, but an internal spiritual war. Krishna is to be Arjuna’s guide through this spiritual war, laying before Arjuna the paths to salvation, the paths he must take to fight his inner battle. Krishna is understood to be an incarnation of Vishnu, the god who is believed to come to earth to set the dharmic balance, the balance of the world’s laws, back in order whenever the world is on the edge of great chaos (Morrison, 82). Krishna has come to teach Arjuna, who can be



understood as standing for every human being, the path to the realization of Brahman and hence to immortality. He tells Arjuna to fight, to wage the spiritual struggle to gain immortality and so Krishna sets out on the journey, leading Arjuna, through the principles of yoga and the various paths that will lead to moksha, the victory of the battle.

There are four different paths one can take to become illumined, i.e. to realize Brahman. Each of the paths has the same goal and we can think of them as different paths up a mountain to its peak. All paths will lead to the same great point. These paths are not necessarily meant to be trodden with the goal of the peak reached in one lifetime. Several lifetimes may be needed, hence the belief in reincarnation. However, Krishna assures us that any progress made up the mountain will not be lost: we will regain our place and continue our ascent (BG, 6:40-45).

One of these four paths is karma yoga, or the way of action. This is a path that would suit those with an active inclination, those who do not like to sit idly around, merely contemplating the world. Subsequently, since Arjuna is a man of action, this is the path that Krishna sets down for Arjuna to follow. This path is one of selfless service; one must do things not for one's own selfish desires but for the good of others: "strive constantly to serve the welfare of the world; by devotion to selfless work one attains the Supreme goal of life (BG, 3:19)." Work must be done without any concern for gain, especially selfish gain (BG, 3:9). Selfishness leads to greater delusion and obscures the true Self within. The gunas of rajas will become dominant, binding to our ego the need for the satisfaction of selfish desires, as Krishna explains to Arjuna that selfish action arises from selfish desire and anger, which in turn arises from the rajas guna (BG, 3:37). Through giving your life for the service of other beings, concern for the ego self diminishes, while concern for others prospers; we forget ourselves in service to others and thereby come to Brahman (Smith, 31). The separation between "me" and "them" decreases as the devotee begins to see Brahman in oneself and in others. The detachment from selfish wants and deeds leads to a detachment from the ego self, where "I", "me", and "mine" no longer take

any precedence and where the immortal Atman, seen in all, takes full prominence.

Another of the four paths is bhakti yoga, the path of love and devotion. This path entails giving all the love in one's heart to Brahman (Smith, 32). It is giving one's self in perfect devotion to the Imperishable: "those who set their hearts on me and worship me with unfailing devotion and faith are more established in yoga (BG, 12:2)." One gives one's heart entirely to Brahman, and through this the ego self dissipates, for the follower of this path is concentrated on Brahman and not on the ego self. The path is often considered to be the easiest of the four paths for it seems to be easier for many to love Brahman as a one loves a mother or father (Morrison, 160). This path is very similar to that which many Christians and Jews take, though their faith is not devoid of the other paths. These two religions focus on their love for God, who takes care of them and loves them. Similarly, followers of this path devote themselves to Brahman, giving Brahman all the love in their hearts. Smith points out that with ever growing love for Brahman, the world weakens its grasp on our being (Smith, 34). This means that the cobwebs on our souls thin out, so that selfish desires become trivial. I understand realization to be met on this path by loving Brahman so completely that the ego self becomes unimportant; all thought and longing is ever for Brahman. I generally feel that this path is not in any way isolated, nor, for that matter, are any of the paths. However, I feel that this path may be the least isolated; it is a path that winds extremely close to the others. Love of Brahman will lead one to doing selfless service for others, to meditating and contemplating the world and Brahman's wonder, just as the love for God in the Jewish tradition leads the Jewish people to do good in the world and to meditate on the greatness of the Lord. This path almost seems to me to become the springboard for all the other yogas. Selflessness seems like a natural result of loving Brahman, whereby such a person, who loves Brahman completely, gives their life in service of Brahman and in contemplation of him.

Another of the yogas is jhana yoga, the path of knowledge of wisdom. This would be the path that one would

take if one were attuned to deep thinking and a fully contemplative life, for this path entails renouncing the world and its pleasures to live a life of full contemplation (Smith, 29). By contemplating questions and more so the questioner of the questions, those on this path attempt to grasp some over arching truth in the world (Smith, 29). Once this truth is grasped, it would foster a shift in the sense of who one is, allowing the discovery of the true inner Self (Smith, 29). In a way, this path is *the path of thinking yourself to God*, or to Brahman. It can be a form of asceticism where one retreats from the world to entirely engross one's self in the search of answers to questions and in the search of Brahman. I tend to think of this path as a philosophical one, analogous to the paths taken by those who contemplate and have contemplated the big fundamental questions in search for truth. Philosophers like Plato or Socrates are ones I would consider having followed the jhana yoga, though they never took up the path of asceticism. They contemplated deep questions of the mind and of the nature of the universe, reaching their own form of understanding. This I think is similar to what those who follow the path of wisdom attempt to do; they attempt to find a fundamental truth that will alter their perception of the world and of themselves, leading them into a deeper level of consciousness and reality.

The last of the yogas is raja yoga, the path of meditation. A person who treads this pathway up the mountain uses meditation as a means to focus their mind and their will. By stilling their minds through the continuing practice of meditation they will eventually reach nirvana: "with senses and mind constantly controlled through meditation, united with the Self within, an aspirant attains nirvana, the state of abiding joy and peace of me (BG, 6:15)." Krishna likens the path of meditation to finding control of one's self – to conquering the self (BG, 6:5-6). Those, he says who have conquered themselves, climb the mountain of human consciousness and reach its summit (BG, 6:7-8). Through meditation one goes deeper and deeper within; the mind is turned completely inward, finding an "inner solitude (BG, 6:10). By turning inward, the practitioner of meditation reaches higher levels of

consciousness, until eventually the practitioner reaches the highest consciousness, pure consciousness, and thereby realizes his/her true Self as Brahman. Arjuna tells Krishna that this would be a very difficult path to tread for it is very difficult to tame the mind. Krishna understands this but stands by the path of meditation, for with practice, he says, one can learn to quiet the mind and thereby realize greater truths (BG, 6:33-36).

Once a person has attained realization, this illumined person will be free to join Brahman at the time of death. As has been said before, at the time of our bodily death our Atman soul continues to live; it does not die. If we have not realized Brahman, and so the gunas (cobwebs) that mirror our desires still bind us to the world of birth and death, then we are reborn. Yajnavalkya reminds us of this in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad when he discusses how our desires determine our next life; if we have any left over desire “we will come back to earth to work out the satisfaction of that desire (BU, 4:6).” However, the illumined one no longer has any gunas to bind them to the earth; there are no desires that have not been met in their lives, for through union with Brahman they have achieved the fulfillment of all their desires. At the time of death, these illumined ones will remember Brahman and their Atman will ascend through the crown of their head to rejoin eternally with Brahman, never to be reborn again (BG, 8:12-13). The supreme goal of union with Brahman, of moksha the liberation from samsara, is achieved. In the *Bhagavad Gita*, Krishna mentions that there are two paths that the soul could follow once the body has died. The first path is the northern path of light and day, the second path is the southern way, of night and smoke (BG, 8:23-25). The northern path leads to eternal union with Brahman, while the southern to rebirth (BG, 8:24-25). These paths bespeak the state of the individuals’ soul at the time of death; those who take the northern path are the illumined ones, whose lives have been infiltrated by the light of the Self within. Those who take the southern path are the ones who are still bound by the gunas to earthly existence; their cobwebs block out the light of the Self. They are those who are still in darkness; the ego and its selfishness have yet to be extinguished. Those that take the northern path gain

immortality, for immortality is the freedom from death; they are free from the realm of samsara, and hence moksha, liberation, is truly achieved with their passing from this world.

However, one does not immediately die after one has realized Brahman. The illumined ones will have to live the rest of their lives in the world of prakriti. Arjuna, speaking for us all, asks Krishna how the illumined person lives in the world, once they have achieved the supreme goal of life (BG, 2:54). Krishna replies thoroughly. They live in peace for they are unaffected by good or by bad: “they are neither elated by good fortune nor depressed by bad (BG, 2:57).” The illumined ones have renounced all selfishness and have overcome the gunas, and so we know that they are no longer bound by the play of the gunas, nor are they slaves to selfish demands (BG, 14:19-22). These people are able to see and know the Self that resides in all beings, because, of course, they have realized the Self within themselves and known it to be in all things. The illumined are like a lotus, for as the water rolls off the petals of the lotus, good and bad just rolls off of the illumined without inundating their being (BG, 5:10-11). There is a chapter in the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad entitled “What the Thunder Said” in which what the thunder says is how I understand an illumined person to act. In this chapter, Prajapati, the creator teaches his children, which include gods and humans, by saying “Da” three times, each time intending for his children to understand a truth (BU, 5:1-2). What Prajapati taught by these three words was to be self-controlled, to give, and to be compassionate; the thunder repeats these teachings every time it roars (BU, 5:2). The illumined person would know, not merely know of, this teaching and would be *self-controlled*, for no longer are they slaves to their desires and their gunas; they are no longer caught in cobwebs. The illumined would *give*, for they would see the Self in all others and recognize them as holy and eternal. They would be *compassionate* because they would realize the Self in all beings and, having suffered the same as all creation, would therefore understand the pain of all beings. Fundamentally, what the thunder tells us whenever it storms is exactly how the illumined person would live their life until

they die and finally join Brahman for eternity, never to be reborn again.

Hinduism is a complete and coherent answer to the human predicament in this world. As I said earlier, as a sentient being in a sea of chaos and suffering, it is difficult for us humans to make any kind of sense of our world. It does not seem fair or right that so many beings, including those other than human, should suffer so much, even to the point of complete hopelessness and despair. But, being forced into such a world, with no choice, we have to attempt to make sense of it all; we have to justify our suffering in this world in order to make it even the slightest bit more tolerable to live in. Religion has generally come to our aid in this. However, this is not to go so far as to say that no religion has truth to it, nor to say that it is just our means of coping with the world. However, this is to say that religions develop, in some part, because they usually can offer some sort of balm for our wounds and a means by which we can continue to live, even in the midst of our greatest despair.

Hinduism, as many other religions, provides people with a way to appease suffering, as well as explains that very suffering. In Hinduism, each being is understood, as I have said, to be more than a body and a mind that decay at death. Those are mistaken who think "I am my body (KaU, 2:6)." Death is often viewed as the greatest source of suffering, but at once death is no longer the impending doom it once had been seen to be. When our bodies die, this is not the end, for part of us continues on. This part of us that continues on, of course, is the immortal Atman within us, which is hung up in the world of karma, enveloped in the cobwebs of the gunas.

Karma is viewed to be the law of cause and effect, though it literally means action (Easwaran, 16). In our society, karma is understood to be something of the like of "you get what you deserve." In Hinduism, karma is the idea that what one sends out into the world, through action and thought, comes back to the sender (Easwaran, 16-17). Karma accumulates through our lives and if we die with karma still demanding to be played out, we must return to the world and to samsara, the cycle of birth and death, once again. In essence, then, karma is like a debt we



have to pay off and if we have not paid in full we have to return to earth (Easwaran, 19). However, we can look at karma more deeply in the context of suffering and in the context of our reason for being alive on the earth. Karma can be looked upon and is looked upon, within the Hindu faith, as that which teaches and helps us to grow in our world (Easwaran, 20). Since karma prescribes that everything we do must come back to us, our very actions teach us about what is right to do and what is wrong to do. If we do something bad, the bad comes back to us, and through negative association, perhaps, we learn to not do bad things. A part of this belief in karma is that we often cause our own suffering: we punish ourselves by the results of our actions (Easwaran, 18). So karma gives to Hinduism a reason for the existence of suffering; suffering is a teaching tool and suffering may very well be the result of our own actions, the actions of this life and those of our previous lives.

Thus, Hinduism provides an explanation for the existence of suffering, but fundamental to karma is the idea that the part of us that does not die can be taught and can grow spiritually. Karma thereby becomes the means by which we grow spiritually in the world in order to one day realize the true Self within us (Easwaran, 20). The goal of life is the union with Brahman, but before our soul, our Atman, can rejoin with Brahman in pure consciousness, we must first gain the knowledge, on earth, of the Atman within us. In a way, we must purify ourselves before we can unite with the pure. Our tie up with karma and our gunas, dirty, so to speak, our Atman. But through living and heeding the lessons of karma we can purify our true Self and thereby be-able to unite with Brahman and escape samsara (Easwaran, 20). Hinduism, here, forthrightly provides humanity with a reason to be alive; it gives humanity a purpose, whereby suffering is turned from a completely negative phenomenon into a critical tool for the purification of our souls. The suffering of the world and the reason for life are immediately explained through the concepts of karma and the Atman. Hinduism answers the fundamental human need to have a reason to be alive, a purpose that keeps us getting up every morning. Finding purpose in life, I feel, is

the most crucial way to find any kind of will to live. As a religion, Hinduism provides every human, and even every creature, with a reason to face each new day.

Through giving purpose, Hinduism also gives hope in the midst of despair. As I have previously said, Hinduism decreases the power of death for those who believe. Death is accepted as a part of samsara, however it is not perceived to be the end of our being, for our true being is something greater, which cannot be destroyed; we are Brahman. Brahman becomes the great first being from which we all derive our source. As many religions do, Hinduism also attempts to explain where we come from; it tries to give us some sort of way to conceptualize how we came to exist. This, in turn, may help to answer the question of why we are here in the first place. Here we encounter the myths of Shakti and Shiva and encounter the notions of the Day and Night of Brahma. Through giving all creation a single source and through explaining that all beings and all things are Brahman, Hinduism touches on the oneness of all life, for we all are Brahman. Separation is an illusion.

Hinduism also answers to the experiential realm of our existence. The oneness of everything in creation, as seen by Hinduism through Brahman, may answer a deep-seated need for the overcoming of separateness. In our world, we see that much of the suffering that goes on is a result of our own selfishness and the selfishness of others: we succumb to the “me first” syndrome. Selfishness causes separation for we are only concerned for ourselves alone and not for others. Hence we get a world of cutthroat competition, where many become alienated in the social, political, and economic spheres. There comes a real need to feel united as one people – a real need to feel like we are one, united and indivisible. Experience tells that we are separate, however, experience also tells us that we need to be with others. Seeing Brahman as the source of all, connects all beings and leads people to begin to treat others as they, themselves, would like to be treated. Using Brahman as the source, Hinduism makes a plea, in a sense, for us to show each other compassion and for us to overcome the selfishness and pettiness that divides the world. Through trying to see the



world as one, people can begin to treat each other with compassion and care, with love and respect, forsaking selfishness for camaraderie and kindness. I think it is no coincidence that at the core of Hinduism is the oneness of all creation, for, I believe, at our core is the need to be united with all life. Only through unity can suffering ever cease.

The concept of Brahman, which incorporates the idea that life's true goal is to unite with Brahman, may also be based in the experiential realms of life. This time experience takes the form of inner longing, rather than the need for unity with others. Speaking for myself, I must say that there is something in me that longs for more than what this world can offer; money and things have no real meaning. There are countless movies in our society that show how rich people, people with the world at their finger tips, if happy, are not happy because of their wealth. The physical things of this world come to be for us not enough to quench the inner thirst of our hearts. In the Brihadaranyaka Upanishad, Yajnavalkya explains to his wife that everything is loved, not for its own sake, but for the Self within it (BU, 2:4-5). This passage speaks of a fundamental desire of every human heart. It is neither wealth nor power that we truly long for, but something higher and greater within these things, that which Hinduism calls the Self or Brahman. In some respects Brahman becomes more of a name Hinduism gives to that which we long for with the core of our being. This is grounded in experience, as we may come to discover the hollowness earthly pleasures give, leaving us longing for something deeper, something that surpasses all things and even all beings. I think that Hinduism is a prime example of our attempt to explain and quench the fundamental human thirst for fulfillment, which can never be met with things. People throughout the ages have made this figure of longing to be God; in Hinduism it is Brahman. I think if there exists anything that can convince me of the existence of some greater power, it is the feeling that there is more than what we see. There is more than the world of prakriti and yet in the midst of prakriti, this something more exists. It exists in goodness and in compassion, in love and in honor; it exists within us. I think that Hinduism truly has acknowledged the fundamental part of

human nature, that desire to know fulfillment and peace, and transforms it into something full of hope, something that we can, if we try, attain. That is, we can know that which makes our hearts thirst, and therefore know peace, by following the paths of Hinduism.

Separateness is an illusion, we are all one in our source and support in Brahman. The construct of our ego is the way we first move about in the world and that which keeps us separate. But as our spirits grow, the more our true Self can shine through and illuminate the world with compassion and selflessness. Hinduism is a fascinating religion, one that answers the fundamental human quests for purpose and for something deeper in our midst. Despite whether you follow this path or another, Hinduism can truly have some impact on your life, waking you up to a mystery and to something greater in the world. If nothing else, take away from this religion the idea of oneness and connection with all other beings, for by remembering this we begin to truly look on others with compassion. We can overcome our selfishness for the greater good of all.

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**Philosophical Funnies**  
Misty Christensen

## The Will to Create

Jazmine Gabriel

Nietzsche is notorious for caustic digs and *ad hominem* arguments; he is famous for single isolated phrases taken out of context and exploited for sometimes despicable causes; he is famous as an immoralist. He is not, on the other hand, famous for his compassion, for his concern for alleviating the suffering of the world. Why not?

In this paper I wish to give an account of Nietzsche's epistemology and of his criticism of past epistemologies, to explain how our minds' categories of understanding contribute to our moral and religious ideas, and finally to show how these categories contribute to our suffering, specifically, our spiritual suffering. Nietzsche's analysis of morality and epistemology reveals how the belief in "truth" inevitably leads to nihilism--a stage of aimlessness, of pointlessness. So when Nietzsche bashes Kant or Plato or Christianity, it is not because he wishes us to abandon good and beautiful philosophies in favor of evil, immoralistic ones; it is because he believes that these philosophies demand that we view the world in a way that necessarily leads to pain and suffering; they demand that we divide our psyche into two parts and oppress the one with the other; they demand that we abandon all that is good and beautiful and creative about ourselves and hand it over to a higher power. In short, they demand the negation of life.

Drawing on the *Will to Power*, I will first explain Nietzsche's conceptions of the origins of morality and of the manner in which it leads to a dualistic way of viewing oneself and the world. This dualistic view involves a higher, spiritual part and a baser, earthly part. I will then examine Nietzsche's critique of epistemology and of the manner in which specific "categories" have contributed to the formation of our values. Finally, I will show how a belief in the truths of morality or reason leads to nihilism. I would like to suggest that any person so concerned with revealing how our mode of thinking leads to nihilism, a person who takes as his project the reframing of the way we think in order to alleviate and prevent the suffering of nihilism,

must be a person who cares immensely about other people. Nietzsche is searching for the root cause of suffering and teaching us the way to plant a new mode of being, a mode that does not divide the person into higher and lower, for the branches that reach for the sun are no more important the ones that root deeper into the earth.<sup>1</sup>

What does morality do for us?<sup>2</sup> It tells us how to behave, what's good and what's bad; it tells us who and what to believe; but more than that, it gives us meaning and purpose. It gives us value by allowing us to be instruments of god's infinite value.<sup>3</sup> Nietzsche says, "Morality guarded the underprivileged against nihilism by assigning to each an infinite value, a metaphysical value...; it taught resignation, meekness, etc."<sup>4</sup> Morality gives purpose because it gives us access to truth, to the true world. The world may look gray to the unbeliever's eyes, but not to the believer, whose morality furnishes him with tools that enable him or her to see the blacks and whites of the world. The believer aims his activity at the truth, at the good, at God. He partakes in the true world by believing in it and working towards it.

Morality also gives power and authority to those who have no physical power, such as the priest. The priest is the only one

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<sup>1</sup> I recognize, of course, that Nietzsche's presentation can be positively obnoxious. Some of his comments are inexcusable. My point is that it is possible to look beyond these comments to a deeper philosophy.

<sup>2</sup> In this paper, the words "morality" and "religion" will refer to Christian morality and religion, for this is the morality with which Nietzsche was primarily concerned. I am going to use the terms "religion" and "morality" interchangeably because the morality Nietzsche is discussing is the Christian morality, i.e. morality derived from religion. It is true that there are religions that do not have the same nihilistic results as Christianity. Further, Christianity should not necessarily be construed as the religion concerned with the teachings of Christ. The morality I am referring to is the one concerned with the teachings of priests...

<sup>3</sup> Friedrich Nietzsche, *The Will to Power*, trans. Walter Kaufmann, (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), 12.

<sup>4</sup> Nietzsche, 37.

with access to God. People need him as an intermediary. As long as people believe that there is only one true God and that the priest is the only access to God, priests can maintain their power. Luckily for the priests, morality itself creates people who are more than willing to believe in the priest's powers. As Nietzsche says, "*Spiritual enlightenment*<sup>5</sup> is an infallible means for making men unsure, weaker in will, so they are more in need of company and support—in short, for developing the *herd animal* in man."<sup>6</sup>

How does spiritual enlightenment make man "more governable"?<sup>7</sup> We have said that morality gives man a sense of meaning, but morality does more than give meaning to individuals, it gives them a place in society and keeps them there. The believer trusts that even evil has a purpose, that the priest knows the word of god, that her job is to surrender to authorities, that she will be rewarded for good behavior. Surrender is the key word here. To be good is to surrender to one who knows what's best. As long as "being good" entails surrender, morality will help keep people in their places.

This, then, is some of what morality does for us according to Nietzsche; but where did morality come from? Nietzsche argues that it comes from a misplacement of the feeling of power. One is so overwhelmed by his own power that he projects it outside himself; he concludes that he cannot possibly be the origin of so immense a feeling and so he attributes it to a much grander being, i.e. god.<sup>8</sup> What is the result of this projection? Nietzsche says:

[I]n so far as everything great and strong in man has been conceived as superhuman and external, man has belittled himself—he has separated the two sides of himself, one very paltry and weak, one very strong

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<sup>5</sup> It is probably the case that by "spiritual enlightenment" Nietzsche means the feelings derived from the Christian religion of serving God and being close to heaven.

<sup>6</sup> Nietzsche, 79.

<sup>7</sup> Nietzsche, 79.

<sup>8</sup> Nietzsche, 86.

and astonishing, into two spheres, and called the former 'man,' the latter 'God.'<sup>9</sup>

In other words, man has projected everything great about himself outside himself; he is left, in short, "a sinner."

This is the basis of the dualism of religion. But the story continues. We project all that is great onto god; but we also project the opposite of all of our worst qualities onto god. We are imperfect; therefore he is perfect. We have subjective knowledge; he has objective knowledge (which will of course allow us to transcend subjective knowledge.) We are constantly changing, growing, dying; therefore he is everlasting and eternal. Our world is the world of becoming; his is the world of being.<sup>10</sup>

The origin of the dualism of religion is the belief in a higher Truth. Whether or not one believes that the god's world is the true world, as in Christianity, or that the world of Ideas is the true world, as in Plato, the same problem arises. The essential belief in both cases is that the world we live in is only apparent, not real—but that there is a true realm.<sup>11</sup> One's goal then is to reach the real world, whether in thought (e.g. the forms or logic) or by reaching the afterlife (heaven); thus, man lives by denying the realm in which he lives. His life is the negation of life.

Why negate life? Why create a fictitious realm of *being*? Why assume that the world in which we live, with all its changing and becoming, cannot be the real world? Because change is suffering. Nietzsche explains the origin of metaphysics psychologically. He says that "[i]t is suffering that inspires these conclusions: fundamentally they are *desires* that such a world should exist."<sup>12</sup> So it is suffering, rather than revelation or reason or God, that is responsible for the unchanging realm of being.

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<sup>9</sup> Nietzsche, 87.

<sup>10</sup> Nietzsche, 86.

<sup>11</sup> Nietzsche, 310.

<sup>12</sup> Nietzsche, 311.



But, Nietzsche asks, [w]hy is it that [man] derives suffering from change, deception, contradiction? And why not rather his happiness?"<sup>13</sup> It almost seems like a silly question: derive happiness from change? But why not? Playing with a baby, admiring the colors of autumn leaves or spring flowers, all these things are impermanent, and yet capable of giving immense happiness. That a thing will not last does not mean that it should necessarily cause us pain. What causes the pain is not the thing's changing, but our clinging to it, our resistance to change. We want to stay young forever, enjoy a specific pleasure forever, stay alive forever, and so on. So we posit a realm in which there is permanence, and then devote our lives to reaching it.

The goal of permanence and disdain for impermanence is evident in numerous philosophies and religions. Because much of Nietzsche's critique stems from his dislike of Plato's philosophy, it may be helpful to recall Plato's conception of the world. For Plato, the empirical world of change is the world of appearances, or the world of becoming; it is the imitation of the true realm of the forms. We reach the forms by means of reason, through dialectic. For Plato, the more abstract something is, the more true it is; that is, the less connected with the sensory realm of change and deception, the more pure it is, the more it belongs to the realm of pure reason.<sup>14</sup>

Nietzsche argues against rationalists like Plato and Descartes, saying that the objectivity of reason is unwarranted. While they turn away from the sensory realm and look to their minds to find truth, to find "things-in-themselves," Nietzsche argues that there is no truth, that there are no things-in-themselves, no world beyond the one in which we live. Plato, Descartes, and Christian morality all claim that the world of becoming is not real, but that reason (or faith in the case of Christianity) can take one beyond, to the world of being. Nietzsche, however, "maintain[s] the phenomenality of the inner world, too."<sup>15</sup> He argues that the inner world is no less deceptive than the outer

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<sup>13</sup> Nietzsche, 317.

<sup>14</sup> See Plato's Allegory of the Line in *Republic* VI 509d-511e.

<sup>15</sup> Nietzsche, 264.

world because both are governed by the same arbitrary categories of the mind.

Kant is another key target of Nietzsche's. However, Nietzsche does seem to agree with a number of Kant's arguments. For example, like Kant, Nietzsche claims that our minds impose order on a chaos of sensations.<sup>16</sup> But unlike Kant, Nietzsche argues that the categories of the mind do not allow for objective knowledge. Nietzsche says that knowledge is to be in a "conditional relation to something"; to feel oneself conditioned by something and oneself to condition it...<sup>17</sup> Whereas for Kant knowledge is absolute, Nietzsche sees knowledge as relational. For Nietzsche, all thinking is interpretation.<sup>18</sup> He would not project a realm of things-in-themselves. Granted Kant says we cannot know things-in-themselves, he still implies that things-in-themselves exist as separate entities that are unchanged, unconditioned by their relationships (for example their relationship to people thinking about them).

While Kant argues that the categories of the mind make experience and objective knowledge possible, Nietzsche argues that categories such as causality, subject/attribute, substance, etc. are tools for man's survival. For example, without the category of substance that allows us to distinguish among "things," we would not be able to run from a bear. The category of substance allows us to project a thing where perhaps there is only a chaos of interacting forces. So the categories are useful.<sup>19</sup> But, says Nietzsche, "a belief, however necessary it may be for the preservation of a species, has nothing to do with truth..."<sup>20</sup>

Another key difference between Kant and Nietzsche is their conception of the will. Kant views the will as a separate faculty, whereas for Nietzsche "there is no such thing as the

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<sup>16</sup> Nietzsche, 307.

<sup>17</sup> Nietzsche, 301.

<sup>18</sup> Nietzsche, 306.

<sup>19</sup> There are places in the text where Nietzsche claims that the categories have no use at all.

<sup>20</sup> Nietzsche, 269.

will...”<sup>21</sup> It is true that Nietzsche talks of the “will” to power, and in some contexts refers to the will as something that exists, but he also makes it clear that the will “is a metaphor that can prove misleading.”<sup>22</sup> He distinguishes between a weak will and a strong will, but in a completely different sense than Kant would. He sees a strong will as the coordination of a multitude of impulses, and the weak will as the opposite. So the will is not *one thing* or one faculty; it is made up of various impulses.<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche’s concept of the will, therefore, does seem consistent with his belief that there is no subject, a view that I will explain below.

The main categories of the mind that Nietzsche takes issue with are substance/attribute, subject, and causality. Let’s start with the concept of a subject. For many of us, the existence of an ‘I’ is the most obvious and basic fact. We agree with Descartes: I think therefore I am. Although we may not be sure of anything else, we are sure that we ourselves exist. Nietzsche objects to this line of reasoning. He says:

But that means positing ‘as true a priori’ our belief in the concept of substance—that when there is thought there has to be something ‘that thinks’ is simply a formulation of our grammatical custom that adds a doer to every deed.<sup>24</sup>

Nietzsche says that a “subject” is our “term for our belief in a unity underlying [everything.]”<sup>25</sup> He argues that anything we perceive as a unity is “tremendously complex.”<sup>26</sup> Thus, there is no reason to assume the existence of a “single subject.”<sup>27</sup> Like Hume, Nietzsche points out that what we perceive as a subject

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<sup>21</sup> Nietzsche, 270.

<sup>22</sup> Nietzsche, 28.

<sup>23</sup> Nietzsche, 28.

<sup>24</sup> Nietzsche, 268.

<sup>25</sup> Nietzsche, 268.

<sup>26</sup> Nietzsche, 270.

<sup>27</sup> Nietzsche, 270.

is not any one "thing" because it is always changing: A thing "*signifies* a unity but is not a unity."<sup>28</sup>

Why is Nietzsche so determined to undermine our belief in a subject? Nietzsche believes that our "concept 'reality' or 'being,' is taken from our feeling of the 'subject.'"<sup>29</sup> And, according to Nietzsche, belief in the reality of "being" undermines and falsifies our present existence in the realm of becoming. How does Nietzsche get from an "I" to the belief in a realm of being? One word: permanence. When Descartes determines that the only thing he can be certain of is himself, he suggests that the self is permanent and unchanging, an Archimedean point from which he can move the world.

From the concept of subject we derive the concept of substance, something underlying existence to which attributes cling.<sup>30</sup> Just as every person believes he has an unchanging, and perhaps even an eternal soul or self, he also believes that other objects have an underlying permanence. This is not say that people believe that stones have souls or selves, only that we perceive 'things,' as separate atomic substances. The idea that underneath all the change of the world there is a permanent substance, stems from our positing an 'I' beneath all the changing perceptions and thoughts that constitute consciousness.

The next concept of permanence that Nietzsche would like to do away with is that of things-in-themselves. Though Kant concedes that we can never know the world of things-in-themselves, he still grants them a great deal of power. The things-in-themselves cause the things in the realm of appearances. Further, things-in-themselves make freedom possible, which in turn makes morality possible. Again, Nietzsche wants to get rid of this concept because it promotes the belief that reality is beyond the present world.

Nietzsche thinks it ridiculous to posit thing-in-themselves: "If I remove all the relationships, all the properties,' all the

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<sup>28</sup> Nietzsche, 303.

<sup>29</sup> Nietzsche, 269.

<sup>30</sup> Nietzsche, 268.

activities' of a thing, the thing does not remain over..."<sup>31</sup> Why not? Above we discussed the possibility that a thing, a stone, a self, is not one subject or substance, but rather a multiplicity of interacting forces. For man's preservation, it is necessary to posit a unified thing out of the chaos of sensations and perceptions that flood us at any given moment. So a "thing" is as a means to "bind together the multiplicity of relationships, properties, activities..."<sup>32</sup> But it is not for that reason "true." Without the relationship of things with one another, without the so-called properties of a thing, there would be no thing. For example, think of the self or consciousness. Nietzsche argues, in agreement with Hume, that the self is a bundle of ever-changing perceptions, impressions, etc.; take away the perceptions, and there is no self left over.

The concept of things-in-themselves is "nonsensical" for other reasons as well. First of all, Kant says one cannot apply the categories of the mind to the realm of things-in-themselves; and yet, sure enough, he has the things-in-themselves *cause* things in the realm of appearances, even though causality is one of his categories.<sup>33</sup> A second problem is that a thing is what it is by virtue of its attributes. A thing's attributes, or properties, are its effects on other things; but a thing-in-itself is obviously not affecting other things (especially since causality is a category of the mind that cannot be applied to realm of things-in-themselves.); so without relationships to other things, the "thing-in-itself has no properties; but a thing without properties is no thing, so there is no thing-in-itself."<sup>34</sup>

This argument conveys an essential theme in Nietzsche's philosophy, relationship. Nietzsche rejects the atomic conception of existence that so many of his contemporaries embraced. He believes that there can be no isolated "things." So there can be no things-in-themselves because things are only things by virtue of their relationships to other things. Similarly, there is no atomic soul substance; the self is a self by

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<sup>31</sup> Nietzsche, 302.

<sup>32</sup> Nietzsche, 302.

<sup>33</sup> Nietzsche, 300.

<sup>34</sup> Nietzsche, 302.

virtue of its relationships to the things it perceives, thinks about, acts upon, etc.

The next category that Nietzsche rejects is that of causality. Again, like Hume, he argues that we have no experience of causality and that the law of causality is a "habit of belief so much a part of us that not to believe in it would destroy the race."<sup>35</sup> But again, a thing's utility does not have anything to do with its truth-value.<sup>36</sup> Nietzsche claims that the search for a cause is an attempt to find something familiar. The process is similar to one in which we try to name an object; in both cases we are searching for a "pigeon-hole" in which we can place our experience; we are trying to make it the *same* as something else.

Now let us look at Nietzsche's critique of logic. Many logicians believe that their love of logic springs from their desire to know the truth. But Nietzsche argues the opposite: "[T]he will to logical truth can be carried through only after a fundamental falsification of all events is assumed."<sup>37</sup> What does logic assume? First of all, it assumes "things." Things, we said, are the mind's unification of a multiplicity for the sake of practicality. The belief in the truth of a thing means to believe in the truth of the categories of subject and substance that make the concept of a thing possible. And again, these categories operate on the basis of their utility, which in no way guarantees their truth.

In logic we say that A must be equal to A, in other words, we "assume there are identical cases."<sup>38</sup> But, in our world of becoming, it is not likely that there are two identical "things" (especially since there are not even individual things if everything is always in flux). Therefore, in order for logic to work, we must posit a realm of being.<sup>39</sup>

The concepts of substance and subject exist as premises for logic's "things" and for logic's "equal things." So logic is

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<sup>35</sup> Nietzsche, 273.

<sup>36</sup> Nietzsche, 273.

<sup>37</sup> Nietzsche, 277.

<sup>38</sup> Nietzsche, 277.

<sup>39</sup> Nietzsche, 281.

based on the categories, which Nietzsche argues are “truths” only in the sense that they are conditions of life for us...”<sup>40</sup> Logic takes as its premise that identical cases are possible, but Nietzsche argues that this premise is simply not true. Identical cases, if they exist at all, exist only in our minds. Therefore, logic does not tell us anything about the world in which we live, the world of becoming. This realm of being, of permanence, where ‘A’ is equal to ‘A’ and ‘~A’ cannot equal ‘A’ is made up, purely fabricated.

Nietzsche does not deny the utility of the categories: “Because we have to be stable in our beliefs if we are to prosper, we have made the “real” world a world not of change and becoming, but one of being.”<sup>41</sup> But he still thinks that the belief that things “have a constitution in themselves [is a] dogmatic idea with which one must break absolutely.”<sup>42</sup> Why? Nietzsche believes that the projection of the true world devaluates the world we live in; it is an attempt to escape the world of becoming and suffering: “it has been our most dangerous attempt yet to assassinate life.”<sup>43</sup>

Nietzsche says that suffering inspires us to create the world of being; we believe that it will ease our pain. But the belief in a permanent realm does not ease the suffering of change; it rather exacerbates it. We are unable to enjoy the present moment, the present life. We hate the present moment, the present life, for torturing us, for not being what we wish it to be, namely permanent. For Nietzsche, the person who thinks like this is negating life; he is an “unproductive, suffering kind, a kind weary of life.”<sup>44</sup> The desire for the true world, then, is not an admirable goal at all; it cripples a person, it prevents him from living in the true sense, it is the “impotence of the will to create.”<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> Nietzsche, 278.

<sup>41</sup> Nietzsche, 276.

<sup>42</sup> Nietzsche, 302.

<sup>43</sup> Nietzsche, 314.

<sup>44</sup> Nietzsche, 317.

<sup>45</sup> Nietzsche, 317.



The man who invents the true world is “weary” of life, but he still has enough creativity to invent. Nietzsche now asks us to imagine “[t]his same species of man, grown one stage poorer, no longer possessing the strength, to interpret, to create fictions...”<sup>46</sup> It is this species of man that “produces *nihilists*.”<sup>47</sup> By a nihilist, Nietzsche means “a man who judges of the world as it is that it ought not to be, and of the world as it ought to be that it does not exist.”<sup>48</sup> The world has no meaning to him and he is angry that it has no meaning.

Nietzsche argues that every moral system necessarily leads to nihilism.<sup>49</sup> For some time, the moral system holds together; people believe in truth and devote their lives to it. But then truth, which has been so carefully cultivated by morality, “turn[s] against morality.”<sup>50</sup> People begin to realize that the true origin of morality is not god, but psychological need.<sup>51</sup> Once “the shabby origin of these values [becomes clear], the universe seems to have lost value, seems ‘meaningless’...”<sup>52</sup> The cloud that covers the arbitrariness of morality disperses; and it becomes clear that there is no Truth in which we can ground our values.

This then is how morality necessarily leads to nihilism. Man realizes that he no longer aims at something, that he cannot derive his own value from his being a part of some “grand unity,” that the “true world” is a psychological fabrication.<sup>53</sup> If there is no goal or point to anything, no order or unity, no truth, there seems to him to be no meaning.<sup>54</sup> But man wants an objective value system; naturally, he is upset to discover that his own subjective desire for values is the origin of the moral system. Man concludes that if the origin of his supposedly objective values is subjective man, then there are no values. Or,

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<sup>46</sup> Nietzsche, 317.

<sup>47</sup> Nietzsche, 318.

<sup>48</sup> Nietzsche, 318.

<sup>49</sup> Nietzsche, 16.

<sup>50</sup> Nietzsche, 10.

<sup>51</sup> Nietzsche, 10.

<sup>52</sup> Nietzsche, 11.

<sup>53</sup> Nietzsche, 13.

<sup>54</sup> Nietzsche, 13.



in other words, if man is the creator of meaning, then there is no meaning. He is unable or unwilling to see himself as a value-forgers.

Many people believe that Nietzsche argues for nihilism, that he wants us to stop at the belief that there is no meaning in the world. But this is not at all the case. Nietzsche is arguing that nihilism is a stage that necessarily results from moral value systems. He by no means wishes us to stay in nihilism. In fact, Nietzsche says that nihilism is *only* a stage, and further, that it is a “pathological stage (what is pathological is the tremendous generalization, the inference that there is no meaning)...”<sup>55</sup>

Nietzsche criticizes the nihilist’s extreme generalizations. The nihilist believes that he is being objective. He does not see that the statements “all is false” and “there is no meaning” are judgments with presuppositions of their own, presuppositions that derive from the value system he thinks he has abandoned. The nihilist has abandoned certain values like truth and goodness, but he has not thrown away the “values that pass judgment.”<sup>56</sup> The nihilist believes “that there ought not be anything meaningless and in vain.”<sup>57</sup> But, Nietzsche asks, “[w]hence this: there ought not to be? From where does one get *this* ‘meaning,’ *this* standard?”<sup>58</sup> The nihilist would have to believe that “to have any right to be, the character of existence would have to give the philosopher pleasure.”<sup>59</sup> This of course is absurd. The nihilist does not see that his nihilistic beliefs stem from valuations as absurd as the values he is supposedly rejecting.

Nihilism is “ambiguous” according to Nietzsche. He distinguishes between two types or aspects of nihilism: active and passive. Nihilism may be a sign of the strength and “increased power of the spirit” or it may be a sign of weakness, of the “decline and recession of the power of the spirit.”<sup>60</sup> How

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<sup>55</sup> Nietzsche, 14.

<sup>56</sup> Nietzsche, 24.

<sup>57</sup> Nietzsche, 23.

<sup>58</sup> Nietzsche, 23.

<sup>59</sup> Nietzsche, 23.

<sup>60</sup> Nietzsche, 17.

is it a sign of strength? Suppose a person realizes the absurdity of a moral system that denies the world and calls it untrue; suppose he thinks it ridiculous to spend one's life seeking a higher, truer world, when there is a perfectly good one right here; he simply outgrows the need for a morality that demands that he submit to a higher authority who knows better, an authority who knows the meaning of the world but implies that no one else can know it without his help. For this person, it no longer makes sense to look outside himself for meaning. The value system simply doesn't work for him anymore. This doesn't mean that he is willing or ready to make values meaning for himself. He must first pass through a nihilistic stage; but it is a healthy stage, a rejecting of values before the creating of new ones.<sup>61</sup>

Passive nihilism, on the other hand, is not a healthy stage; it is an illness, an exhaustion, a weariness of life. It is a "sign of the lack of strength to posit for oneself, productively a goal, a why, a faith".<sup>62</sup> Whereas the active nihilist is able to survive without an authority dictating meaning, the passive nihilist feels abandoned and unable to continue. Nietzsche describes the strength of the person who has abandoned the traditional value system below:

Who will prove to be the strongest in the course of this? The most moderate; those who do not require any extreme articles of faith; those who not only concede but love a fair amount of accidents and nonsense; those who can think of man with a considerable reduction of his value without becoming small and weak on that account...<sup>63</sup>

So nihilism has the potential to inspire growth, a metamorphosis perhaps.<sup>64</sup> In order to understand how nihilism can serve as a catalyst for change, consider the following

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<sup>61</sup> Nietzsche, 17-18.

<sup>62</sup> Nietzsche, 18.

<sup>63</sup> Nietzsche, 38.

<sup>64</sup> Nietzsche, 319.

example: A very rich man has lost everything in a fire. At first he is devastated; the world is not fair; there is no point in continuing without his beloved “things.” But then he begins to realize that his attachment to mere things was limiting his growth as a person. He suddenly feels free, as if energy that had been tied down by the things has been released. He starts to appreciate the beauty of the world around him; he starts to examine himself as a person and make the appropriate changes. Maybe he meets another person and falls in love; maybe he cultivates some sort of creative hobby. What is ultimately important, however, is that he is free to create meaning for himself. He is able to grasp how externally derived meaning is harmful to his development as a whole being, as a free and creative being.

In this metaphor, the rich man’s “things” are the equivalent to the moral person’s values or the philosopher’s truths. Losing them in a fire generates the nihilistic phase. Perhaps an even more apt analogy than a fire would be a situation where a person’s things no longer give him any joy. He gradually realizes that material things don’t “work for him” anymore. He then decides to give them up. For a while he may live in nihilism. But after a while, he begins the gradual process of learning to create his own values.

In order to create new values, man has to transcend the categories of his mind that initially led to the division between being and becoming. He has to learn to see the world in a different way. When he sheds his former belief in the subject, “much follows.”<sup>65</sup> There are no longer any “things,” no “world of effective atoms,” no belief in cause and effect.<sup>66</sup> Without the belief in a subject, there can be no things-in-themselves, for these are essentially “subjects-in-themselves.”<sup>67</sup> When the realm of things-in-themselves disappears, the concept of ‘appearance’ vanishes along with it.<sup>68</sup> For if there is no “true world,” there is no false world either. The result is that man

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<sup>65</sup> Nietzsche, 297.

<sup>66</sup> Nietzsche, 297.

<sup>67</sup> Nietzsche, 298.

<sup>68</sup> Nietzsche, 298.

lives *in this world* without striving for a “beyond.” There is nothing false about his world, but nothing absolutely true either. Man’s self-created values will not be life-negating; his values will incorporate and embrace the reality of becoming and change without reflecting a longing for permanence.

With subjects and things gone, opposites also vanish, for “only from those of logic do we derive the concept of opposites—and falsely transfer it to things...”<sup>69</sup> This allows us to move “beyond good and evil,” not in the sense that one can behave wickedly because there is no good or evil, but in the sense that one understands “the naiveté of postulating opposites where in fact there only differences in degree...”<sup>70</sup> One understands that things are not black and white; one understands the complexity of the world.

With the categories gone,<sup>71</sup> man is free to enjoy the process of life instead of living towards some higher goal. He understands that Truth is also a process; it is not “something there, that might be found or discovered—but something that must be created...”<sup>72</sup> Man is no longer in denial of the fact that he is the creator of values; he will not fall into nihilism merely because there is no objective creator of values. He can thus create values that are life affirming. His senses are “spiritualized” instead of condemned as evil.<sup>73</sup> His life becomes a work of art as he cultivates “a more joyous, benevolent, Goethean attitude towards sensuality...”<sup>74</sup>

Nietzsche’s choice of Goethe as an ideal reflects his concern with working towards a holistic way of life. Nietzsche admires

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<sup>69</sup> Nietzsche, 298.

<sup>70</sup> Nietzsche, 71n.

<sup>71</sup> It may not be possible for the categories of the mind to “be gone” completely. They will always have a role in the practical realm. What is important, however, is that they don’t become the foundation of metaphysics, as they have in the past.

<sup>72</sup> Nietzsche, 298.

<sup>73</sup> Nietzsche, 71n.

<sup>74</sup> Nietzsche, 72.

the “renaissance man” in Goethe, his cultivation of all aspects of himself. To contrast, what bothers Nietzsche about Christian morality and idealist philosophers is their negation of part of the human being. He objects to dividing a person into reason and senses, or higher and lower parts. Nietzsche is concerned with the whole person; to repress the senses or the passions is to repress a large part of one’s being.

Nietzsche is arguing against the Platonic view that reason rules over the “lower parts” like a king, but he does not want us to abandon the use of reason altogether. Goethe, Nietzsche’s ideal, obviously “thinks,” but he thinks in a different way than philosophers enamored of logic “think.” Although, Nietzsche says that “‘[t]hinking,’ as the epistemologists conceive it, simply does not occur,” he is not arguing that we do not think; he is arguing that thinking as an isolated process unconditioned by other processes and relationships does not occur.<sup>75</sup>

Nietzsche is objecting to the belief that we have a rational faculty that transcends the world of change and becoming; he is objecting to the belief that reason is objective and divine.

For Nietzsche, thought is not a direct chain of causally linked ideas. Thought is not: A equals B and B equals C, therefore A equals C. As I explained earlier in this paper, equality and causality (which allow for conclusions in logic) are not real. There is no empirical knowledge of either equality or causality. They therefore belong to the manufactured realm of being. Nietzsche wants us to break completely with the realm of being. He wants to bring thought back to the real world of becoming. He wants us to view thought as “conditional knowledge of the conditioned,” not as something absolute and objective.

Now, one may argue that is impossible to have experience without the categories of the mind as described by Kant; one may argue that it is impossible to “get rid of” the categories. Whether Nietzsche is arguing that it is possible to think and experience without the categories is not entirely clear. What is clear, however, is his argument that we should not worship the

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<sup>75</sup> Nietzsche, 264.

categories as truth-givers. It is one thing to believe that the baseball thrown at a window is the *cause* of the window's breaking; it is quite another thing to believe that the cause of my feeling angry is your words. The problem with the categories is that they are used indiscriminately. We look for causes where the concept of causality has no relevance.

We can take Nietzsche's argument that the causes are not real as suggesting that we reform the role of the categories in our lives. Nietzsche wants to convey the message that a misuse of the categories results in spiritual suffering. For example, it is helpful and healthy to believe that the bear chasing me is a substance different from myself; it is another matter to believe that the self is a *substance* or that god is a *substance* separate from the rest of existence. Belief in made-up entities is a set-up for pain. God is supposed to take care of us; when he doesn't do what he is supposed to do, we suffer. Attempting to understand the world through "*god-tinted*" glasses creates a world full of unsolvable problems. Why is there evil? How do we get to the good?

It is faith in the categories of the mind that creates questions like these by creating opposites. Good and bad, right and wrong, white and black, all derive from the misapplication of the categories of our minds. The belief in separate things, in their sameness and difference, results in the concept of opposites. But when we move beyond the categories and understand a thing as dynamic process, we can move beyond the suffering induced by belief in separate things. We can move towards a holistic way of life that does not attempt to "lop off" aspects of existence that have been unfairly classified as evil. We come to understand that opposites do not actually exist as separate entities, for there are no separate entities. We come to understand existence as a process.

The main problem with our worship of the categories of our minds is the way in which our own power becomes misplaced. We project our power onto god or a priest or anyone other than ourselves. But god is not the most powerful one in our world; it is rather the categories and their creations that have the most power. "Substance" creates separate things and "Causality" gives the power to affect one another. Before we know it, our

lives are directed towards fitting all experience into the pigeon-holes these categories have supplied. Nietzsche wants to redirect this misplaced power so that people in the real world of becoming can have their power back. He wants to halt the habit of projecting (our) power onto made-up entities in the realm of being.

Perhaps this is how we can understand the "will to power": as the willingness to accept one's power and not displace it, either onto god or some other human being; as the eagerness to exercise one's power in the real world; as the enthusiasm for creating and shaping one's own life. If the "will to power" sounds like an ominous phrase, perhaps it is because it represents an enormous responsibility, namely, the responsibility to be undaunted by the magnitude of one's own power.

## Body Asleep: meeting of the mind (and body)

Jazmine Gabriel

My foot is attached to my leg

(so I've heard)

But most times I cannot feel it

(a body blurred)

I bang it hard against the carpet

(to move it's nerves)

But I feel Nothing

(it has not stirred)

My hand is attached to my arm

(I know)

But when I sleep it seem my blood forgets

(to flow)

I wake up and search for lost fingers

(with nowhere to go)

I shake my hands, count my fingers, and bargain with  
them

(quid pro quo)

But there's nothing to keep them from leaving again

(or so I'm told)

Something about the body as a watch

(a machine)

I think my limbs were never wound

(or not that I've seen)

My mind- a rubber band stretched unevenly

(inner workings unsound)

I'd open it for repair

(but peeking's not allowed)

And Pandora told Descartes and me never to open clocks

'Cause we might not like what's to be found



**Creation and discovery**  
Jazmine Gabriel

Before the earth started moving.  
Before it became round.  
One could walk on lines  
And fondle triangles.

When wholes were made of parts  
And parts were made of smaller whole parts  
There were no remainders  
And long division was just.

Before radar painted planets on telescopes  
When the sun and moon played fair and followed  
the leader  
The oldest child was an only  
Child in the middle.

Before god created discovery  
Before man discovered creation  
Before our Mother hit puberty and grew curves  
Roads had a finite number of points.

**Paid Soothsayer**  
**Jazmine Gabriel**

The room upstairs is packed full of habitual strayers;  
Swarming individuals, dangerous and layered.  
The speaker pontificates, articulates, commiserates;  
He correlates our common hates,  
The way our fates could all relate,  
If we would just cooperate.  
The bobbing heads just nod their men,  
Delete their thoughts, and all press send.  
They like the way he speaks their truths,  
Conveys their ways, behooves their blues.  
Woe is me, I'm so alone  
They moan in varied monotone

To the masses the 'I's will impart the moral  
Fortunate are They for the individuals plural

## **Contributors**

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